

An Apostle of Modern Liberty.

4¹

barbarous law, and at any rate he was not bound to assume the rôle of apologist of bigoted, bloodthirsty bishops, and defend the savage repression of religious opinion, which in Utopia he had condemned so emphatically. He was, alas, destined in his own person to experience the bitterness of that intolerance from which, in his later years, he could not free himself. If he could not tolerate Protestantism, he had at least the strength of will and conviction to become the martyr of that coercion of conscience by a despotic, self-willed ruler before which Catholic and Protestant must alike bend or break. It is to his eternal honour that he carried his opposition to an arbitrary king the length of dying on the scaffold for his convictions.

That More did not intend all his opinions to be applied in serious legislation is evident from the closing sentence. " I must needs confess that many things be in the Utopian wealpublic which in our cities I may rather wish for, than hope after." Its practical effect in accentuating the reaction against the oppressive agrarian system is, however, perceptible in Wolsey's measures against enclosures in 1518 and 1526, though these measures were, unfortunately, largely ineffective. The value of his work as a political treatise does not lie so much in the suggestions it makes, as in the criticisms it offers. It is a noble protest against the misgovernment and injustice of the age, the earnest appeal of a high-toned mind for reform on behalf of the toiling masses, and for a more unselfish spirit in legislation. The political immorality of the age, the spirit of class selfishness, the injustice of social conditions, the misery of the masses, are castigated with a fine wit and a generous indignation. Utopia is the mirror of a humane and philanthropic spirit held up, with fine effect, to the crass realism to which true religion and humanity are antagonistic. We may, I think, claim its author as an apostle of modern liberty, for by his anticipation of the future he belongs in many respects to the nineteenth rather than to the sixteenth century. We could quite well imagine him addressing a popular audience in these democratic times in the spirit of the modern humanitarian statesman. The limitation of the liberty of the individual, the absorption of both the family and the individual in the State, may grate on our inborn sense of

personal freedom, and would